

VZCZCXYZ0001
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTH #0792/01 1581407
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 061407Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1936
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS ATHENS 000792

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR S, D, EUR/SE AND S/WE (GERDA LANE)

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [KWMN](#) [KPAO](#) [GR](#)
SUBJECT: SENIOR ADVISOR TAHIR-KHELI ATTENDS WOMEN
LEADERS' MEETING ON THE MIDDLE EAST

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -- PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

1. (SBU) Senior Advisor for WomenQs Empowerment Ambassador Tahir-Kheli visited Greece on behalf of the Secretary to attend the Women LeadersQ Working Group Conference hosted by Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis. The June 3 QLagonissi Declaration summarized the Working GroupQs initiative to establish a fund for local and regional women entrepreneurs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and called for public and private sector cooperation to foster regional economic empowerment. (Note: The QLagonissi DeclarationQ and other PD materials will be provided to PA-EI for posting on the S/WE website. End Note.) Following the conference, Ambassador Tahir-Kheli met with women in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), members of parliament, and women entrepreneurs to discuss the challenges and conditions faced by these leaders in Greece.

Women LeadersQ Working Group Conference

2. (SBU) Greek Foreign Minister Bakoyannis hosted the fifth meeting of the Women LeadersQ Working Group at the Lagonissi resort in Greece. The Conference identified several areas to create economic empowerment in the MENA region, specifically the establishment of a fund to promote local and regional women entrepreneurship. The Working Group will appoint a committee to prepare a report for the establishment of the fund and ensure the participation of women representatives from the MENA region. In an informal pull-aside, Bakoyannis told Ambassador Tahir-Kheli that she understands the USG has just recently launched a similar fund -- the One-Woman Initiative -- and that although she does not expect financial support, she would appreciate moral support from the USG towards this initiative. At the concluding press conference, Bakoyannis expressed the hope that the fund would be ready for Secretary RiceQs endorsement by this SeptemberQs UN General Assembly meetings. She also announced that Greece would initiate (and pay for) two other agreed steps: a biennial awards program; and internships for young MENA women outside the region, starting with two positions in Athens.

3. (SBU) Ambassador Tahir-Kheli also had several informal bilateral meetings with Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, Icelandic Foreign Minister Ingebjorg Gisladdottir, the First Lady of Iraq Hero Ibrahim Ahmed, and former Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) Member Hanan Al-Ashrawi. All the members of the Women LeadersQ Working Group were

supportive of Secretary Rice's initiative to strengthen United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Meetings with Greek Women in NGOs, Parliament, and Business

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador Tahir-Kheli met with women actively engaged in NGOs and on issues involving women's justice over coffee hosted by Dr. Anne Speckhard at the Ambassador's residence. The interlocutors stated that a political will exists in the Greek Government as well as a nascent awareness by civil society that the situation for women in Greece needed to change. Despite this consciousness, the participants in the morning roundtable said that more needed to be done to address the changes impacting the structure of Greek society as well as issues of trafficking of women. Moreover, they reported that many new immigrant women are victims of violence and abuse due to a lack of awareness or a refusal to recognize their rights, which include access to healthcare and protection facilities.

¶5. (SBU) Ambassador Tahir-Kheli highlighted several recent initiatives that the USG had launched, including a Women in Justice program and the One Woman Fund Initiative as examples of public-private sector cooperation. She also summarized key points from the Lagonissi Conference and stressed the importance of working towards women's economic empowerment and security.

¶6. (SBU) A luncheon was held in honor of Ambassador Tahir-Kheli with over seventy prominent women from business, civil society, and government. The event was co-hosted by the Women's Entrepreneur Association and the Hellenic National Commission for UNESCO. Many of the participants shared their interest in the recent Women Leaders' Working Group Conference and expressed their appreciation for the momentum generated by the Secretary's initiative. Ambassador Tahir-Kheli said that she was delighted and hoped that these public and private sector fora would further constructive dialogue between the USG and Greece.

¶7. (SBU) In a dinner meeting, Ambassador Tahir-Kheli met with several women parliamentarians to discuss the challenges that they were facing in government. They said that women did not support the nomination of other women when the party lists were constructed. In addition, women who did get elected to office continued to face criticism on both a personal level and a professional level. Despite Greece's accession to the European Union in 1981, these women leaders said that despite appearances, the Greek mentality had not changed and that the underlying nature of the society remains conservative.

Public Diplomacy Outcomes

¶8. (U) Hellenic Public Television (ERT) broadcast Ambassador Tahir-Kheli's short interview and excerpts from her speech at the Greek women entrepreneurs luncheon on the afternoon of June 4. Top-circulation Ta Nea and leading financial newspaper Express also interviewed her and other senior women leaders for stories to be published this weekend; expatriate-oriented Athens News and English-language Kathimerini may also cover the event. Separately, Ambassador Tahir-Kheli's private meeting with Yianna Angelopoulou, a former member of parliament who organized the 2004 Olympics and is now the publisher

of up-and-coming Eleftheros Tipos newspaper, generated much goodwill. As noted earlier, post will also supply audio/visual material and transcripts to PA-EI for use on www.state.gov and publications designed to promote women's empowerment.

SPECKHARD